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AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A method ~~for~~ of facilitating the creation of personalized products, for use in a system where a user on a user computer can access at least one host merchant computer via a communication network, the host merchant computer including a web server in communication with a products database containing information on products available for personalization and further containing manufacturing capabilities of a plurality of vendors capable of producing the products available for personalization, the method comprising:

providing to the user via said communication network at least one web page providing an assortment of product selections for products in the products database, ~~each where one or more products available in the products database being is-are~~ associated with manufacturing capabilities of ~~one~~ two or more vendors, from the plurality of vendors, capable of producing the product;

receiving a message from the user via said communication network indicating a selection of a selected product from said assortment of product selections, the selected product being associated with manufacturing capabilities of two or more vendors capable of producing the product;

retrieving a set of manufacturing capabilities for the selected product from the products database, the set of manufacturing capabilities including manufacturing capabilities of ~~one~~ two or more vendors, from the plurality of vendors, capable of producing the selected product;

providing to the user via said communication network a design interface, said design interface comprising at least one web page including at least one design tool that allows the user to select ~~predetermined design selections~~ configuration options and to create individualized enhancements, said design tool is conformed to only allow configuration options and enhancements which satisfy the manufacturing capabilities of at least one vendor of the two or more vendors, from the plurality of vendors, that are capable of producing the selected product, and wherein said design interface presents to the user a default set of product configuration options and a default set of enhancements;

receiving from the user via said design interface a set of design configuration selections and a set of individualized enhancements for said selected product;

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selecting a vendor from the two or more vendors, ~~plurality of vendors~~, the selected vendor being capable of producing the selected product personalized with the set of design configuration selections and the set of individualized enhancements;

converting the set of design configuration selections and the set of individualized enhancements for said selected product into a file having a format compatible with the needs of the selected vendor; and

communicating the file to the selected vendor.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said individualized enhancements include a pictorial image incorporated onto said selected product with an image position determined by the user.

3. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said individualized enhancements include a text message incorporated onto said selected product with a text position determined by the user.

4. (Canceled).

5. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
receiving a search query from the user via said communication network; and
presenting to the user via said communication network an assortment of digital image selections retrieved from at least one digital image database in communication with said design interface, wherein said assortment satisfies said search query.

6. (Original) The method of claim 5, further comprising:
receiving from said user via said communication network a selected image from said assortment of digital image selections; and
incorporating said selected image into said set of individualized enhancements using said design tool.

7. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
receiving a search query from the user via said communication network; and
presenting to the user via said communication network an assortment of text message selections retrieved from at least one text message database in communication with said design interface, wherein said assortment satisfies said search query.

8. (Original) The method of claim 7, further comprising:

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receiving from said user via said communication network a selected text message from said assortment of text message selections; and

incorporating said selected text message into said set of individualized enhancements using said design tool.

9. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

receiving from the user via said communication network a request to save said set of product configurations and said set of individualized enhancements for the said selected product; and

storing said set of product configuration selections and said set of individualized enhancements in a location accessible to that user via said communication network.

10. (Canceled)

11. (Currently Amended) A method ~~for~~ of facilitating the creation of personalized products, for use in a system where a user on a user computer can access at least one host merchant computer via a communication network, the method comprising:

providing an assortment of product selections to the user via said communication network;

receiving a message from the user via said communication network indicating a selection of a product from said assortment of product selections;

retrieving a set of manufacturing capabilities for the selected product from the products database, the set of manufacturing capabilities including the manufacturing capabilities of ~~one-two~~ or more vendors, from ~~the a plurality of vendors~~, capable of producing the selected product;

providing to the user via said communication network a design interface, said design interface comprising at least one design tool that allows the user to select product configuration options and to create individualized enhancements, and wherein said design tool is adapted so that the user may only select configuration options and create enhancements which comply with said manufacturing capabilities of at least one of the two one or more vendors ~~from the plurality of vendors~~ capable of producing the selected product ;

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receiving from the user via said communication network a request to save a set of product configurations and a set of individualized enhancements; and

storing said set of product configuration selections and said set of individualized enhancements in a location accessible to that user via said communication network;

converting the set of product configuration options and set of individualized enhancements into a file having a format compatible with the needs of at least a first vendor capable of producing the selected product; and

communicating the file to at least the first vendor .

12. (Original) The method of claim 11, further comprising receiving from the user via said design interface a set of product configuration options and a set of individualized enhancements for said selected product.

13. (Original) The method of claim 11, wherein said individualized enhancements include a pictorial image incorporated onto said selected product with an image size, image position, and image orientation determined by the user.

14. (Original) The method of claim 11, wherein said individualized enhancements include a text message incorporated onto said selected product with a font, text color, text size, text position, and text orientation determined by the user.

15. (Original) The method of claim 11, wherein said design interface presents to the user a default set of product configuration options and a default set of enhancements.

16. (Original) The method of claim 11, further comprising:

receiving a search query from the user via said communication network; and

presenting to the user via said communication network an assortment of digital image selections retrieved from at least one digital image database in communication with said design interface, wherein said assortment satisfies said search query.

17. (Original) The method of claim 16, further comprising:

receiving from said user via said communication network a selected image from said assortment of digital image selections; and

incorporating said selected image into said set of individualized enhancements using said design tool.

18. (Original) The method of claim 11, further comprising:

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receiving a search query from the user via said communication network; and
 presenting to the user via said communication network an assortment of text message selections retrieved from at least one text message database in communication with said design interface, wherein said assortment satisfies said search query.

19. (Original) The method of claim 18, further comprising:

receiving from said user via said communication network a selected text message from said assortment of text message selections; and

incorporating said selected text message into said set of individualized enhancements using said design tool.

20. (Canceled).

21. (Canceled)

22. (Currently Amended) A method ~~for~~ of facilitating the creation of personalized products, comprising:

receiving from a user via a communication network a first set of design components created for a first product, said first set of design components corresponding to product configuration options and individualized enhancements;

receiving from the user via said communication network an identifier for a second product selected for personalization;

retrieving a set of manufacturing capabilities for the selected product, the set of manufacturing capabilities including the manufacturing capabilities of ~~one~~ two or more vendors, from a plurality of vendors, capable of producing the selected second product;

generating a second set of design components derived from said first set of design components, wherein each component of said second set of design components complies with the set of manufacturing capabilities;

providing to the user a design interface comprising at least one design tool enabling the user to modify said design components, wherein said design interface is adapted so that the user may only create design components which comply with said set of manufacturing capabilities ~~at least one vendor of the vendors capable of producing the selected product; and~~

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receiving from the user via said design interface a set of product configuration options and a set of individualized enhancements for said selected product;

selecting a vendor from the two or more vendors of the plurality of vendors, the selected vendor being capable of producing the selected product with the set of product configuration options and set of individualized enhancements;

converting the set of product configuration options and set of individualized enhancements into a file having a format compatible with the needs of the selected vendor; and

communicating the file to the selected vendor.

23. (Original) The method of claim 22, wherein receiving an identifier for a second product comprises:

providing to a user via said communication network an assortment of product selections available for personalization; and

receiving from the user via said communication network an identifier for a second product selected from said assortment.

24. (Original) The method of claim 22, further comprising:

receiving a search query from the user via said communication network; and

presenting to the user via said communication network an assortment of image selections retrieved from at least one image database in communication with said design interface, wherein said assortment satisfies said search query.

25. (Original) The method of claim 22, further comprising:

receiving from the user a search query; and

presenting to the user an assortment of text message selections retrieved from at least one text message database in communication with said design interface, wherein said assortment satisfies said search query.

26. (Previously presented) The method of claim 22, further comprising:

receiving from the user via said communication network a request to save said first set of design components; and

storing said first set of design components in a location accessible to that user for later use by that user.

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27. (Currently Amended) A method ~~for~~ of facilitating the creation of personalized products, for use in a system where a user on a user computer can access at least one host merchant computer via a communication network, the method comprising:

providing to the user via said communication network a design interface, said design interface comprising at least one design tool that allows the user to select product configuration options and to create individualized enhancements, said configuration options and individualized enhancements comprising design components;

receiving a first set of design components corresponding to a first set of individualized enhancements from the user via said design interface before a product to be personalized has been identified;

receiving an identifier for a product selected for personalization from the user via said communication network;

retrieving a set of manufacturing capabilities for the selected product from a products database, the set of manufacturing capabilities comprising the manufacturing capabilities of each ~~one~~ two or more vendors from a plurality of vendors capable of producing the selected product;

generating a second set of design components derived from said first set of design components, wherein each component of said second set of design components complies with said set of manufacturing capabilities;

loading said second set of design components into said design interface; and

adapting said design interface so that the user may only select product configuration options and create individualized enhancements satisfying said set of manufacturing capabilities.

28. (Original) The method of claim 27, wherein receiving an identifier for a product comprises:

providing to a user via said communication network an assortment of product selections available for personalization; and

receiving from the user via said communication network an identifier for a second product selected from said assortment.

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29. (Original) The method of claim 27, further comprising receiving individualized enhancements and selections of product configuration options from the user via said design interface.

30. (Original) The method of claim 27, further comprising:
receiving a search query from the user via said communication network; and
presenting to the user via said communication network an assortment of image selections retrieved from at least one image database in communication with said design interface, wherein said assortment satisfies said search query.

31. (Original) The method of claim 27, further comprising:
receiving a search query from the user via said communication network; and
presenting to the user via said communication network an assortment of text message selections retrieved from at least one text message database in communication with said design interface, wherein said assortment satisfies said search query.

32. (Previously presented) The method of claim 27, further comprising:
receiving from the user via said communication network a request to save said first set of design components; and
storing said first set of design components in a location accessible to that user via said communication network for later use by that customer.

33. (Currently Amended) A method ~~for~~ designing a personalized product, for use in a system where a user on a user computer can access at least one host merchant computer via a communication network, the host merchant computer including a web server in communication with a products database containing information on products available for personalization and further containing manufacturing capabilities associated with a plurality of vendors capable of producing the products, the method comprising:

receiving from the host merchant via said communication network at least one web page providing an assortment of product selections available for personalization;
selecting a product from said assortment using a web-based selection tool;
receiving a design interface from a host merchant via said communication network, said design interface comprising at least one web page including at least one design tool that allows the user to select product configuration options and to create

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individualized enhancements, and wherein said design tool is conformed to only allow configuration options and enhancements which satisfy said manufacturing capabilities associated with ~~one two~~ or more vendors, from the plurality of vendors, capable of producing the products and to initially present a set of default design components associated with said selected product; and

creating at least one individualized enhancement for said selected product using said design interface;

sending the at least one individualized enhancement for said selected product to the host merchant computer;

selecting a vendor, ~~from the two or more vendors plurality of vendors~~, capable of producing the selected product personalized with the set of product configuration options and the at least one individualized enhancement;

converting the at least one individualized enhancement into a file having a format compatible with the needs of the selected vendor; and

sending the file from the host computer to the selected vendor.

34. (Canceled).

35. (Original) The method of claim 33, wherein said individualized enhancement includes a pictorial image incorporated onto said selected product with an image position determined by the user.

36. (Original) The method of claim 33, wherein said individualized enhancement includes a text message incorporated onto said selected product with a text position determined by the user.

37. (Currently Amended) A system to allow a user to design personalized products, the system accessible to a user on a user computer via a communication network, the system comprising:

a server in communication with said communication network;

a products database in communication with said server, said products database comprising information on ~~an assortment of one or more~~ products available for personalization, and further comprising manufacturing capabilities of each two or more vendors, from a plurality of vendors, capable of creating the one or more products;

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a personalized product module in communication with said products database, said personalized product module capable of presenting selections for the one or more products an assortment of product selections to the user, and said personalized product module further capable of receiving an identifier of a selected product from the user;

a set of design tools in communication with said personalized product module that allow the user to select product configuration options and create individualized enhancements, wherein said set of design tools is adaptable to only accept product configuration selections and individualized enhancements which comply with a set of manufacturing capabilities that includes of the manufacturing capabilities of the one two or more vendors from the plurality of vendors capable of creating the selected product; and

a design buffer in communication with said set of design tools, said design buffer capable of containing product configuration options and individualized enhancements generated by the user via said set of design tools during a current design session.

38. (Original) The system of claim 37, further comprising a product browse tool in communication with said products database, wherein said product browse tool enables a user to browse said assortment of product selections of said products database.

39. (Original) The system of claim 37, further comprising a product search tool in communication with said products database, wherein said product search tool enables a user to search said assortment of product selections of said products database for products associated with a search query.

40. (Original) The system of claim 37, further comprising an image browse tool in communication with said image databases, wherein said image browse tool enables a user to browse said assortment of digital image selections of said image databases.

41. (Original) The system of claim 37, further comprising an image search tool in communication with said image databases, wherein said image search tool enables a user to search said assortment of digital image selections of said image databases for images associated with a search query.

42. (Original) The system of claim 37, further comprising:

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a message database in communication with said set of design tools, said message database comprising an assortment of text message selections; and

a message browse tool in communication with said message database, wherein said message browse tool enables a user to browse said assortment of text message selections of said message database.

43. (Original) The system of claim 42, further comprising a message search tool in communication with said message database, wherein said message search tool enables a user to search said assortment of text message selections of said message database for text messages associated with a search query.

44. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 37, further comprising:

a personal database in communication with said set of design tools, said personal database being accessible only by a particular customer;

a save tool in communication with said personal database, said save tool configured so as to allow the particular user to save design information from said design buffer into said personal database; and

an upload tool in communication with said personal database, said upload tool configured so as to allow the particular user to upload design information from said personal database into said design buffer.

45. (Original) The system of claim 37, further comprising:

a template database in communication with said set of design tools, said template database comprising default sets of design components for each product of said product database; and

a template module in communication with said template database that generates a default set of design components for a particular product selected by the user for presentation to the user at the beginning of the design process.

46. (Currently Amended) A system to allow a user to design personalized products, the system accessible to a user on a user computer via a communication network, the system comprising:

a products database comprising information on an assortment of products available for personalization, and further comprising for one or more products of the

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assortment of products, manufacturing capabilities of ~~one-two~~ or more vendors, from a plurality of vendors, capable of creating the product;

a first module in communication with said products database, said first module capable of receiving an identifier of a selected product from a user; and

a second module in communication with said first module, said second module comprising at least one design tool that allows the user to select product configuration options and create individualized enhancements, wherein said design tool is adaptable to only accept product configuration selections and individualized enhancements which comply with a set of manufacturing capabilities associated with the one-two or more vendors ~~from the plurality of vendors~~ capable of creating the selected product;

47. (Original) The system of claim 46, further comprising a product browse tool in communication with said products database, wherein said product browse tool enables a user to browse said assortment of product selections of said products database.

48. (Original) The system of claim 46, further comprising a product search tool in communication with said products database, wherein said products search tool enables a user to search said assortment of product selections for products associated with a search query.

49. (Original) The system of claim 46, further comprising at least one image database in communication with said second module, said image databases comprising an assortment of digital image selections.

50. (Original) The system of claim 46, further comprising an image browse tool in communication with said image databases, wherein said image browse tool enables a user to browse said assortment of digital image selections of said image databases.

51. (Original) The system of claim 46, further comprising an image search tool in communication with said image databases, wherein said image search tool enables a user to search said assortment of digital image selections for images associated with a search query.

52. (Original) The system of claim 46, further comprising:
a message database comprising an assortment of text message selections; and
a message browse tool in communication with said message database, wherein said message browse tool enables a user to browse said assortment of text message selections of said message database.

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53. (Original) The system of claim 46, further comprising a message search tool in communication with said message database, wherein said message search tool enables a user to search said assortment of text message selections of said message database for text messages associated with a search query.

54. (Original) The system of claim 46, further comprising:

a personal database accessible only by a particular customer;

a save tool in communication with said personal database, said save tool configured so as to allow the particular user to save design information from said design database into said personal database; and

an upload tool in communication with said personal database, said upload tool configured so as to allow the particular user to upload design information from said personal database into said design database.

55. (Original) The system of claim 46, further comprising:

a template database comprising default sets of design components for each product of said product database; and

a template module in communication with said template database that generates a default set of design components for a particular product selected by the user, for presentation to the user at the beginning of the design process.